



# Ethics and Self-care: Why is professional self-care an ethical practice?

JOHN WALSH: Welcome. My name is John Walsh. I work for the George Washington University at the Center for Innovative Training in VR. And today's presentation is "Ethics and Self-care: Why is professional self-care an ethical practice?"

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The Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation at the George Washington University is focused on developing innovative methods to train VR personnel to support the work of state VR agencies in delivering high quality rehabilitation services and to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

The center is funded by a five year grant. Our core mission at the center has been to assess the training needs of state VR agencies, survey graduate programs and rehabilitation counseling, and to review their current curriculum and identify any gaps and needs, develop and disseminate training, both online and in-person, disseminate training models and/or other resources developed by technical assistance centers related to the mission of our center, develop and maintain communities of practice, and offer webinars in a variety of topical areas and other learning modalities based on our needs assessment.

In year one of the project, the center will select 10 state agencies to receive access to online training modules for their personnel that focuses on core components of the rehabilitation process. The courses offered will provide an overview of the state VR program and also look at the rehabilitation process from eligibility to case closure.

We're very fortunate today to have Dr. Rob Froehlich to join us today as the main presenter for this webinar. Dr. Froehlich has been a rehab counselor educator for 20 plus years. He has been involved in self-care and ethics training and also creating publications in the VR setting for over 15 years. He is also an LPC and CRC and currently sits as a member of the CRC Ethics Committee. Dr. Froehlich, welcome.

ROB FROEHLICH: Thanks so much, John. We've heard a good bit from my good friend John so far, but let me tell you a little bit about John, too. John's going to help me kind of narrate and we're going to have a little bit of a discussion today. But John Walsh is also a certified rehab



counselor. He is the CITVR project director. But beyond that, he's got 30 plus years of experience in the provision of VR services, both as a counselor and an administrator, and most recently, coordinating the provision of technical assistance and training to state VR agencies.

He'll be our narrator or our interviewer today. And one quick disclaimer I'd like to say too is, as a member of the CRC Ethics Committee, all of the opinions and statements that I make today I make on behalf of Rob Froehlich, not on behalf of CRCC.

JOHN WALSH: Today's webinar learning objectives. We hope to be able to understand the relationship between counseling codes of ethics and self-care, discuss how self-care concepts relate to professional performance, to colleagues within the work setting and to the ethical provision of rehabilitation counseling services. And we also want to describe a process for developing a self-care plan.

So Dr. Froehlich, I want to start at the beginning. And I want to ask you why is self-care an ethical practice?

ROB FROEHLICH: I think that is a great place to start, John. And so professional self-care, no matter the discipline, no matter what you do for a living, professionals can become overwhelmed and we can feel isolated on our own island. Lots of folks in multiple different settings-- business, education, health care-- can feel particularly overwhelmed and burdened, but counselors, we take on other people's life situations. We hear about them on a daily basis. And sometimes therefore we need professional self-care, maybe even a little bit more than some other settings.

So continuing education, including webinars like this, allow professionals facing similar challenges to gather to compare best practices, to provide a community of support, if you will, from like-minded individuals. The need for professional self-care is even greater during periods of significant change.

Now one thing-- John, as you mentioned, I have been talking about this topic for quite a period of time. One thing that I have encountered frequently is when we as counselors talk about self-care, sometimes we put it in terms of it being all about me or selfish or it's abnormal.

Interestingly, you know, we've been working on this presentation, John, you and I, for a little bit of time. But just this past week in my practicum course, one of-- somehow, we were on the topic of self-care and one of the students said, well, I feel kind of like it's selfish. And I said, that's really interesting. That's one of the topics we're going to talk about this week.

Beyond it not being selfish or abnormal, our codes of ethics mandate or present the environment for us to consider that we must do self-care. Self-care is intended to help us avoid things like professional burnout or impairment. We're going to talk a little bit more about the



CRCC code of ethics, section D.1.e Monitoring Effectiveness and section D.3 Functional Competence and Impairment in just a few moments.

Let me take a step back. The most recent version of the CRC code of ethics in 2017 is when it went into effect. Each one of the sections of the code have a lead in paragraph and a description of, hey, here's what we talk about in this section. Well, under Professional Responsibility Section D, one of the statements is, rehab counselors engage in self-care activities to maintain and promote their own emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being to best meet their professional responsibility. So we kind of lead off with that as one of our professional responsibilities.

It is not just the CRC code of ethics, but the ACA, American Counseling Association Code of Ethics as well that includes the same exact verbiage on this topic. Again, self-care activities improve emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Going even further back when we think about the professional preparation of rehabilitation counselors and counselors in general, anybody who has been involved in the counselor education, the rehabilitation counselor education world, or as a student or as a educational professional, knows that the Counsel on Rehabilitation Education and CACREP have kind of emerged as the accrediting bodies.

And so the CACREP standards deal with self-care as well. Under the curriculum section, the core area of professional counseling orientation and ethical practice, under section 1I, the self-care indicates that we will include self-care strategies appropriate to the counselor role. So even from pre professional training all the way through, the materials that support our profession indicate self-care is not only a good thing, but part of our ethical mandate as well.

JOHN WALSH: So our codes and training clearly tell us we should engage in self-care. But what exactly is self-care?

ROB FROELICH: Well, let's talk about this from a number of different perspectives, John. What follows-- I'm going to go to our next slide in just a moment-- is a reading list and references for all of the articles that we're going to make reference to in this training. The list is also included in the resources section on the webinar web page. So the page that you went to access this webinar, multiple resources will appear there that will be related to our topic today.

The articles that are included are some of the more recent and innovative approaches looking at this topic. The topic of self-care and ethics is not new by any stretch, but this grouping of articles should provide some relevant and contemporary inquiries into the topic and should give you a little bit of a frame of reference relative to the topic.

To me what's important is not so much so that you read every article or what have you, but that what I want for us to talk about today are some actual strategies that come from the



literature. I want to share some of these resources, what the researchers have found, and some of the suggested strategies relative to self-care from these particular articles.

So you can tell by the titles that I'm going to go through with you right now that our focus is on self-care. A meta analysis of burnout with job demands, resources, and attitudes. Creative approaches for promoting counselor self-care. A case study focusing on ethics and counselor wellness. The relationship among personal and work experiences. Implications for rehabilitation counselor well-being and service provision. To your mental health practitioners, take care of yourselves, a literature review on self care. Self-care and well-being in mental health professionals. The mediating effects of self-awareness and mindfulness. Work related stress burnout compassion and work satisfaction of professional workers in vocational rehabilitation. And finally, breathing words slowly, creative writing and counselor self-care, the writing workout.

You can see we have a variety of different topics, but getting back to your question, John, of what exactly is self-care, let's talk about-- let's operationally define it a little bit and maybe kind of demystify it, take away from this very abstract concept and make it applicable to our work setting.

So both the ACA and CRC codes, ethics codes, note that self-care are activities to maintain and promote counselors' own emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being to best meet their professional responsibility. Now you'll see when we talk later on about self-care assessments and coming up with self-care plans, these are the actual components that we always refer back to when we talk about self-care.

More simply, self-care is merely taking the time to take care of our own needs, not at the exclusion of others, but to enhance our ability to work with others. Self-care is a broad term referring to any actions or experiences that enhance or maintain counselors' well-being. So that's kind of our starting point.

But the term self-care refers not only to an engagement in various practices-- and this is really important for us as counselors-- but also to having a caring attitude or being caring towards oneself. Sometimes as counselors we think of others' needs on a daily basis. I'm not telling you anything you don't know about that. But sometimes we forget about our own needs and how the two relate, and some times we're not so nice to ourselves.

So this concept of engaging in self-care is crucial and let's talk a little bit more about it. Another topic very much related to self-care is this concept of mindfulness, being present, being aware. And one of the first articles I want to talk about, Richard's, Campenni, and Muse-Burke in 2010 looked at this concept of mindfulness in self-care. They surveyed mental health professionals, 148 of them, and their findings revealed that mindfulness is a significant mediator between self-care and well-being.



But they also found that the frequency of self-care activities, while it relates to enhanced well-being, that enhanced well-being does not require the state of mindfulness. So let's take this mindfulness and this self-care, let's take it a little step further, too. An article in *Counseling Today* from December 21, 2016 was entitled, "Cultivating a Practice of Mindfulness."

So within the article, they talk about all sorts of ways that counselors can engage in this concept of mindfulness. But one thing that I'd like to draw your attention to is they have what they call the Notice Five Things activity. So it's really a simplistic approach to being mindful.

So just-- the person engaging in this would pause for a moment and then they would scan their environment based upon which of the senses makes sense to them. For some people, all of these senses make sense. For others, one or two make more sense than another. But basically pause for a moment, look around, and notice five things that you can see. Listen carefully and notice five things that you can hear. And then finally, notice five things that you can feel in contact with your body.

Helps you-- this simple, simple activity helps you just be present in the moment and focused in a way that sometimes our schedules and our daily activities don't allow for us to be in that mindful approach. So if this is helpful, I share it with you from this particular article.

JOHN WALSH: So Dr. Froehlich, one of the takeaways I have from your response is as we go about our day to day duties in life, it's good to bring more intentionality to the issue of personal and professional self-care and that we can take that time to develop simple practices that will ultimately help us in developing means to provide self-care.

ROB FROEHLICH: Absolutely, John. And I think sometimes, again, no matter the setting that you're in, but particularly in the counseling world, our schedules are such that we think we have absolutely no time to engage in something like this. Sometimes the amount of time that's required to engage in self-care is really minimal. And it can be a process where you start small and move further. But absolutely, I mirror your reflections on what we've discussed thus far.

And building on that a little bit too, John, why do we engage in self-care activities? Self-care activities are intended to moderate or avoid the concept of burnout, of being so emotionally, physically drained that one can not be effective in their professional role. And if you think about it, I like to, when I teach about self-care, I like to talk about a continuum, on the one end being more curious and challenging situations.

Vicarious traumatizations, hearing someone else's trauma experience and somehow internalizing. Compassion fatigue, similar to that. And burnout, right? So these are the more significant ones. But there are other things that also impact our ability to be effective at work on the other end of the spectrum. Just frustration, sadness. Now-- and this next one is not a clinical term, but I think you know what I mean when I say being cranky. Short temper, tired. All of those daily hassles have an impact on the work that we have done, too.



So when you think about this concept, it's not just the more serious challenges, but those other ones can really be a barrier as well. Research has demonstrated that burnout can result in such things as anxiety, depression, drops in self-esteem, substance abuse, decreased performance, and increased health problems. So you can see these are big professional challenges that self-care is intended to address.

JOHN WALSH: And I know as we prepared this presentation, we sent out a brief survey and we looked at a sample of VR administrators, rehabilitation educators, and other training professionals and we asked them some basic questions about this topical area. And what came through loud and clear is the empathy of the respondents have relative counselors as well as their agreement on the need to focus on this topic in VR. It clearly came out that we need to provide more information on this topical area. And throughout this presentation today, we'll be infusing some of those responses from our webinar survey throughout.

When we sent out the survey, we identified that the questions would be dealing with professional self-care in ethics in the vocational rehabilitation setting. And one of the questions we asked is, how do you see these topics as related and what would you hope to learn about these topics?

And the survey responses of what do you want to know, some of the top responses we received were the importance of giving staff the permission to care for themselves, learning techniques to manage burnout, concerns that many professionals are caught between work, children, and aging parents, and also that VR professionals are being asked to do more with less and concern that this could lead to potential ethical shortcuts.

ROB FROEHLICH: Yeah, John. A couple of those things are crucial too, and I'm so glad we're talking about them today. One is the fact that-- and we'll talk more about these suggestions-- frequently as counselors, counselor educators, rehab counselors, we know some great strategies and some great things relative to self-care, but it's this first part, giving people permission to actually care for themselves.

You'll see in some of our survey responses later, some great recommendations came up and we're going to share them with you. But in terms of the last piece too about being asked to do more with less and concern that this could lead to ethical shortcuts, the literature kind of relates to the more with less concept, too.

Sullivan and Bates in 2014 found that burnout and flourishing, actually doing well and thriving in the work setting and being effective, are strongly related to each other and may have implications for client outcomes. But here's one that's probably not going to be surprising to anybody listening to the webinar. Caseload size is also contributing to burnout levels. So the higher the case load, the more likely the person is to be impaired and potentially experience burnout.



JOHN WALSH: And this is really important information that we need to share today. And I was hoping that you could provide us with a bit more information on self-care and the counseling literature that's currently available.

ROB FROELICH: Well, John, I'm super happy you asked me that question because that's exactly what I'm prepared to do now. And had you asked me something I'm not prepared for, this wouldn't be such a great webinar. But let me talk a little bit more about--

[LAUGHTER]

Let me talk a little bit more about the self-care and the counseling literature. So 2011, Alacorn conducted a meta-analysis of burnout with job demands, resources, and attitudes. And again, as we mentioned before, the results suggest that higher demands, lower resources, and lower adaptive organizational attitudes are associated with burnout.

So organizational attitudes are things like job satisfaction, turnover intentions, my plans to leave, and organizational commitment. Organizational commitment being the fact that I can really get behind the mission, the purpose, the way that things are done within my organization.

An important little side note there too, organizational commitment-- one of the pieces of being an ethical professional is having that organizational commitment, accepting employment is at a place of employment indicates that you are on board with what their organizational culture and theories state, and if not, that you go through and you figure a way to have a conversation about things where you may have concerns.

And ultimately if you can't have that organizational commitment, it may be time to consider thinking about alternative employment too. And that really all is within our code of ethics.

So going a little further beyond this Alacorn, Bradley, Whisenhunt, Adamson, and Kress in 2013 wrote an interesting piece. I'm going to talk about the piece in a little bit, but they also noted in there that in 2004, the American Counseling Association conducted a study exploring the prevalence of impairment among ACA members.

The study showed that 63.5% of counselors knew a counselor who they would consider impaired. Of those counselors considered to be impaired, the participants shared that supervisors, 54.3% and colleagues, 64.2%, were aware of the counselor's impairment. Additionally 75.5% of the counselors responding to the survey reported that they believed that impaired counselors pose a risk to the counseling profession.

So we're going to talk a little bit later on about, hey, how do I interact with colleagues and what is my responsibility? Sometimes we feel like, well, that's just not my business. Well, it kind of is.



And relative to what the codes of ethics say too, we'll talk about that as we go along a little bit further, but we sometimes have to step in. We have to be caring, not intrusive, but caring.

So beyond talking about that ACA, survey Bradley, Whisenhunt, Adamson, and Kress also talked about a few other things. They made reference to an article from 1996 where Csikszentmihalyi used the term flow to describe the experience of being fully engaged in the creative moment.

So during flow, the creator is so completely involved in the creative process that concerns and fears fade from direct awareness. I would argue that it goes beyond creative engagement, but even for some folks, to physical activity. You can be so engaged in what you're doing that some other things just kind of melt away.

So this function of the creative experience may be helpful for professional counselors who find themselves taking ownership of their client's issue. So this externalization and being so lost in the moment can also take the form of containment or compartmentalization, and that can be very effective relative to warding off burnout.

What they also did go on to speak about are a couple of other things. That as I mentioned early on when we started off, little changes are a big deal. Incremental steps forward relative to self-care really are helpful. You're walking along that path and taking care of yourself. They also mention that every plant needs water. This analogy sort of-- it's pretty self-evident there, but without water, the plant's going to die. Think of self-care as water for us and how important you can see that would be.

They make a recommendation. They talk a lot about creative approaches to self-care, but one is particularly focused on scrapbook journaling. And what this does for me is really points out how incredibly self-- entirely individualized self-care is. Scrapbook journal probably isn't my cup of tea, but there are going to be lots of people that that's going to work for.

I know I have my own approaches towards self-care. Running is a big thing for me, and for some people, that is an entirely unappealing-- why would you want to do that kind of activity? John, what does self-care mean to you?

JOHN WALSH: Yeah, so although I don't do scrapbook journaling, I do journal on a daily basis and I find that to be a way of self-care of how I start my day. I also journal throughout the day to try to organize how I'm going to approach my workload for any particular moment in time. And then also kind of wrapping up the day, of how did it go, what were the things I was grateful for and what I'm going to do to prepare for the following day. I'm

Also one that needs to take a moment occasionally, get up, move, walk, and especially get outside. The sun, to be out in nature for a bit. So individually, I find that to be very helpful kind of quick ways to incorporate some self-care into my daily routine.





ROB FROEHLICH: Yeah, yeah. Makes complete sense. And again, so for you, journaling itself is interesting. Maybe not scrapbook journaling, but that's just kind of indicates you have to find what are some options and tweak them to make the most sense or appeal to you in the greatest particular area. We're going to talk in a little bit relative to the various different areas that are assessed relative to self-care, self-care is very individualized. That's our point here.

We're going to talk a little bit about the various areas that are assessed in self-care, but physical can be anything from taking chair push up breaks to running a marathon. It can involve things like nutrition and eating. And there may be very different goals along a continuum there, too, from watching what I eat, that may be my goal, to having food that comforts me. I'm not suggesting any kind of bad health behaviors, but for some people there can be a place for all of those things.

Relative to spirituality or the spiritual realm, that could vary all the way from being very involved in organized religion to things like being open to not knowing, being OK with not knowing, or having experiences of awe. I know for me sometimes where I feel at my most peaceful is walking along the beach and connected to a higher power in a way that I don't feel in other places. That's very spiritual.

We're also-- folks who are in the counseling realm have had years and years of education. Lots of-- we all have had various different experiences, but frequently we find ourselves in this situation where we are noted as in charge of the situation or an expert on something or other. Sometimes it's very therapeutic and self-care related to try at times not to be in charge or the expert, to do something where you're not the person who's on top of their game.

I'm going back a little bit to the concept of journaling, too. Warren, Morgan, Morris, and Morris wrote an article entitled "Breathing words slowly: Creative writing and counselor self self-care-- the writing workout." And what they do is they kind of apply this concept of a physical workout to this very cerebral activity.

They start off with the warm up and it's almost the context and setting, a pen that you like, paper that's of a quality that makes you feel good, or a journal or something along that way, or a place, a setting. I know when I was writing my dissertation, I had a dissertation chair within a sunny area, a comfy chair, the material was comfortable. So they talk about how that is really important to consider.

And then there's the sprint, which is five minutes of writing, no interruption. No interruption. Just write what comes into your mind. Then there's the sit-ups piece. And this is an interesting one to me. You're doing two things simultaneously. One is a to do list and the other is what to do with a square of molding clay. One is very list-oriented and the other is very creative. So you alternate back and forth going through, here's what I have to do, oh, I can turn it into a mouse. Oh, I can make it into a tool. Those types of things.



So it's kind of flexing your mind in two different ways. If you're familiar with Myers-Briggs too, it's kind of the J and the P. The J is really the list-oriented, time-oriented piece, and the P is the options generated piece. So moving from that sit-ups to the yoga piece, yoga would be writing about a troubling experience or emotion that could lead to a loss of presence.

And then finally the relaxation piece is experiencing of a clear mind and writing whatever is meaningful at the end of this activity. I think that this analogy to kind of a workout an hour, workout session, but it's cognitive. John, you can see how that would be very self-care related, right?

JOHN WALSH: Absolutely. Absolutely.

ROB FROEHLICH: So going further a little bit on this concept of what does the literature say, I've lived in Virginia for quite a number of years, so this is kind of like a local term, but the granddaddy or grandmama of all lit reviews on self-care, in my opinion meaning the most comprehensive, would be Posluns and Gall in 2019. It's on your reading list.

They break the concept of self-care down into these-- all of the literature pertaining to self-care they break down into these various different areas of awareness, balance, flexibility, physical health, social support, and spirituality. Again, those kind of dimensions that make up self-care. So if you're looking for a really comprehensive description of what's been written in self-care and the counseling or mental health or rehabilitation arena, this is the article for you.

One other piece that is included on your potential reading list is an article entitled "Shelley: A case study focusing on ethics and counselor wellness." The wellness treatment plan in this particular article-- so what it really is, is they go through a scenario that would be very believable to anyone who works in the vocational rehabilitation or mental health setting.

This individual thinks that she has an hour between her clients to do some documentation and some notes and what have you, but somehow there was a miscommunication and the scheduling person, but the person in right when she thought she finally had this hour, but then the phone is ringing and she's finding out that she is not going to be paid in a timely manner because some of the documentation that she submitted didn't have what was needed and then while she's doing that, she sees in her email that there's a problem and her car may be repossessed and all of this sort of dramatic situation, which really isn't so dramatic. Some people call that Tuesday.

What the point is though is that this person needed to take a step back, look at the various realms of her life, and come up with a wellness or a self-care treatment plan. And sometimes that does involve other professionals. In this case, it was a physician, a cardiologist, who was able to help her look at her physical health and then looked at making progress in all of the other areas of her life relative to self-care. So in some ways, it may be dramatized, but in some



ways it's not. In some ways that's the life that we live. So I bring that to your attention to take a look at that as well.

John, is it OK if I switch gears a little bit here from the literature and talk a little bit about how do I apply or how do I assess my needs for self-care.

JOHN WALSH: Yes, because I was going to jump in and say essentially the wellness treatment plan as presented also shows the importance of an interdependent approach to developing that plan, that it's not only what we self-generate, but also perhaps other professionals that are connected with our life to help us really craft something that's meaningful for us.

ROB FROEHLICH: All right. So be patient with me for just a second. I'm going to tell you a quick story that I think very much relates to being able to assess, am I feeling burned out or am I just feeling cranky or along that other end of the continuum that I talked about. So how can I tell?

So a couple of weeks ago, I was walking my dog, Griff, in the morning, which is one of my self-care activities, because I love to be outside, much like John, and I love my dog, Griff. So we're coming around our corner going up to our house and we heard what we thought-- well, the dog alerted and I thought maybe it was kids screaming or something. I came around and on the corner of my street, there's a delightful elderly couple that lives in the house.

And the wife said, can you come over and can you help me? My husband's fallen. I said, OK. I got over. It was a little bit more involved than I had thought. He took quite a fall. So we got him a chair. We kind of got him up from lying down on the ground. Turns out he was kind of bleeding a bit. He was complaining a lot about a pain in his hip.

But you know sometimes-- and I know that many of you all as counseling professionals have worked with elderly folks, or maybe with parents or other family members. She was very concerned about taking him to the hospital, then the months of rehab, he wouldn't be in the house, all sorts of things. So I said, I see where we're at. I'm going to go take my dog. We live a few houses down. Gonna go take the dog, because he really wasn't adding anything to the situation.

I dropped him off and I came back and they were kind of still sitting there and still kind of wrangling over-- now and the wife was sort of like, John, you need to stand up. And she brought the walker over and I was thinking, oh, that's not happening. But you know, I met them where they were at. Again, he wasn't able to get up. So it took a couple of times for me going back and forth, trying to get ready for the day and whatnot, but coming down.

Finally, we did get him on the ambulance and sent off and I got a text later in the day that he had broken his hip and he was having surgery. Got a text later in the week. Had the surgery, was successful, he's on the mend, he's doing well, we're looking forward to getting him in rehab. So this was Wednesday.



On Saturday, I'm getting in the car to go up and visit my son at college, which again, another self-care activity. Love that kid. He makes me feel good. I was about to get in the car and I got another text and my neighbor passed away unexpectedly. Well, my first reaction of course was - I mean, it was very sad. You know, I cried for 15 minutes. I'm not a big crier, but this was particularly sad.

Where does all of this come back to self-care you're asking? So let me tell you how it comes back to self-care. So I had my moment. I honored the magnitude of the situation. It was a very sad situation. But then I asked myself these questions that I pose to students all the time or that I pose to other professionals or colleagues.

So after providing the support that I did, was I able to describe my feelings towards this situation? Yeah, it was terrible. It was the last few moments the man was ever in his house that I was there with him. Did my emotional reactions match the contents I'm working with? Absolutely. Completely makes sense. It wasn't overindulgent. It wasn't anything otherwise.

But am I able to find some joy in other activities that are unrelated to the situation at hand? Absolutely. Went out to dinner with my son and his friends that night. Got up the next morning and ran, because that makes me feel better. And lastly, am I perseverating on this topic or can I let it go?

Now other than talking with you all now about this, this really hasn't been a central focus in my life during that period of time. I mean, I honored what I was feeling, but I kind of was able to move on. If your answers when you're in situations of stress and challenge are different than those answers to that question, that's a time where you might want to think about how much am I engaging in self-care? What supports might I need? How can I change the situation around?

John, does that really long rambling story make sense and match up with our content here?

JOHN WALSH: Yes, it does. And I think it's really critical that you give a concrete situation where you're applying these four questions that really check in to see where we are on kind of that continuum of, are we leaning more toward being burned out or is it just a matter of it's a bad situation, but it's not impacting the full parameters of your life?

So I think that is a very relevant story. And I think now we wanted to really look at-- we have a lot of information from the literature and a lot of good summaries of where folks can look to get additional information, but what are some of your recommendations on how we get started on that path to addressing our self-care needs?

ROB FROELICH: Well, John, some of our survey respondents had some good thoughts or suggestions before we even talk about that. Do you want to share a little bit of that with us about what they wanted to know about developing a self-care plan.



JOHN WALSH: Sure. So one of the survey questions we asked was, what do you want to know about developing a self-care plan? And kind of a primary answers that came out is it's important to really infuse strategy for self-care environments with restrictions on time and resources.

So how do you infuse those strategies when you know you have very limited time and resources to do it? How do you put together a plan? And then the more pressing issue sometimes is, how do I implement it? And then lastly, it's really so tough to implement a self-care plan when you're just exhausted emotionally, but it's even more important during those times that we address it.

ROB FROELICH: Yeah, it absolutely is, John. And so what we have shared with you are a few different forms of ways to assess self-care needs, or the various areas of self-care need. These resources are, again, within the resources section of the webinar page that you used to access this particular webinar.

But one of the resources comes from a site called therapistaid.com and it's sort of a worksheet relative to the various spheres of self-care. So physical self care. Some of the common ones. Eat healthy foods, exercise, get enough sleep. Psychological and emotional self-care. Get away from distractions. Easier said than done, I know. Participate in hobbies, go on vacations.

Social self-care. Meet new people, have stimulating conversations, keep in touch with old friends. Spiritual self-care. Again, this is going to vary on a continuum, but for some folks, meditate, pray, recognize things that have meaning in my life, and professional self-care. And here's a really interesting one. Say no to excessive new responsibility. We are not always so awesome at saying no to things, but that really is a self-care activity. Take breaks during work, those types of things.

A second form comes from the social work department at University of Buffalo, and it really, what this one is was adapted from a book, a workbook called "Transforming the Pain-- a Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization" from Saakvitne, Pearlman, and staff. But you'll see that the resource on there, too.

Again, broken down by physical care, psychological self-care, emotional, spiritual, relationship self-care. So things like enlarge my social circle, ask for help when I need it. Workplace professional self-care. And then overall balance. Strive for balance within my work life, my workday, my family, relationships, those types of things. And there's also an area on this one to add, hey, maybe these assessments don't encompass everything for you. Are there other areas to think about?

And then finally one is from NAMI and looks at physical self-care, psychological self-care, emotional, spiritual, workplace, but with a couple of different topics or phrased a few different



ways. So whichever one resonates for you. There's not a right or wrong with this. They all include, as you heard mentioned, physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, relationship.

And workplace or professional areas, plus this overall balance. And it is really important-- this last minute note that we make here too. Additionally, what other areas are relevant to you? Remember we talked about self-care being entirely individualized. So there may be things that are very important to you that wouldn't be to somebody else, but because they're important to you, you should include them.

We have also included a number of different self-care plans format. So again, I don't advocate for one or another more than the other. One is from a project at Princeton University called You Matter. And You Matter is an initiative by Princeton to give everyone within the Princeton community the tools that they need to create a safer and more caring environment.

I think it's a particularly useful tool for our purposes relative to self-care planning. There's an assessment at the very beginning part so you have a sense of where you currently are at with self-care. And then there are kind of questions like, which aspects-- which dimensions are you ready and willing to work on? What are the benefits of working on this behavior? What could get in the way of achieving your goal? How can you reward yourself? What can help you achieve your goal? When will you start?

That's a hugely important question because otherwise it's sort of a nice cerebral discussion, but if you don't have a start date or a plan, that's nice, but it's important for you to include that. We also have included a self-care plan years ago when I worked with a technical assistance and continuing education program at GW, a colleague of mine, Joan Kester and I developed another self-care plan, very similar, looking at, where am I now?

What am I good at? What do I need to work on? What could stop me? Where do I want to be? What's my long term self-care goal? How will I get there? What are the areas I want to focus on? And then what am I going to need in terms of resources and tools? How will I measure and reward my efforts? And then finally an area of self reflection relative to the topic.

Again the reachout.com project, I've also included that link. And you can kind of take a look at their self-care plan. It's a much shorter one, looks at the various physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, relationships, and work place areas for you to kind of jot down things you want to work on. Overall balance. What negative strategies do you need to avoid? And if you implement your plan, how much you feel. Sometimes keeping the end in mind, as Stephen Covey would say, and thinking about, why am I even doing this, can help direct what it is that you're doing.

Now I've shared sort of ways to assess self-care, some self-care plan formats. But again, do you remember early on I mentioned that frequently we have our own great strategies and we have



a good fund of knowledge. So John, you want to talk a little bit about some of the suggestions that we got from our survey looking at suggestions for getting started?

JOHN WALSH: Yeah, absolutely. As he mentioned, we had performed a survey in order to get some information from the field. And we asked about what are some of the suggestions for getting started around self-care? And some of those ideas were looking at ways to take mini breaks during the day. Leveraging employer resources. Many employers, especially large employers, have an employee assistance program, or they may have a wellness program or other programs that are offered during the work day. Really great to really look into and see what's available from your employer.

The other pieces are learning strategies for small steps towards self-care. An example, and something that I try to use, is taking a walk, even at lunch, or getting up from my desk and moving away from the computer screen and trying to clear my head, kind of relaxing and breathing. Having plants, can be a plant in your office or something else that you could connect with that brings a level of relaxation.

Taking time off. Taking a vacation. A quick meditation break or finding a quiet space to relax and to be more mindful in the moment. Folks also mentioned it's always helpful to have supportive managers or leadership who understand the value and importance of self-care and really support that as a cultural norm.

And that work culture that really values positive support. A break room that includes fun activities within it. Perhaps a leave it at work board, where folks can move an object before they leave to assure them that they're going to leave work behind. And also really focusing on that why. What is the core mission of VR and the services we provide to the folks we serve?

ROB FROEHLICH: Yeah. John, those are excellent recommendations. One thing that I did want to provide some thought on, one of the suggestions, was taking time off. So CNBC had an article looking at professionals in the US workforce and time off. They noted a couple of other different surveys in this article. So Bankrate surveyed 2,600 people, found that 13% will take fewer than one quarter, or 25%, of their allotted days and 4% aren't planning on taking any.

Project Time Off looked at the fact that Americans gave up 212 million vacation days in 2017. And here's another interesting one. For those folks who did take time off, Glassdoor surveyed and found that 29% of employees who did take time off were contacted by colleagues on a work-related matter.

So part of self-care sometimes-- you heard a couple of different areas where it was like saying no or setting limits. Maybe sometimes we're not really awesome at that, but 29% of people who finally did take that time off really should be taking that time off. And I understand every work setting has different expectations and different demands. But we all do need to be able to take a break from time to time.



JOHN WALSH: So clearly we really have to look at how we approach intentionally taking some time off to refresh, to recharge, and many Americans right now are not doing that. We also know that in vocational rehabilitation, as well as more globally, professionals have continually increasing demands that can take a toll personally.

So Dr. Froehlich, what did the code say about our interdependent nature as rehabilitation professionals?

ROB FROEHLICH: Yeah. I'm glad we're going to have this opportunity to talk to, because again, sometimes we feel like we're being intrusive or we're being nosy or it's really not any of our business what's going on from one of our colleagues. But our codes talk about the fact that we do have some interdependent responsibilities.

So the CRC code of ethics, looking at section D3, functional competence and subset a, impairment, indicates that rehab counselors assist colleagues or supervisors in recognizing their own professional impairment, provide consultation and assistance when colleagues or supervisors show signs of impairment, and intervene as appropriate to prevent harm to client.

I'm not saying that we have to be our colleagues' counselors, but what I am saying is that as a profession, empathy is the core to what we do. We're caring about other human beings. And it shouldn't be different just because those human beings happen to be our colleagues. The code says sometimes it's hard for us to see our own challenges or impairments or what have you, but having a caring colleague or supportive person in our world of work can make the difference between impairment and having a really bad day, if that makes sense.

The American Counseling Association code similarly makes a statement, but also goes on and expands, as does the CRC code, about supervisees and students. There are some redundancies, too, and sometimes we forget about the demands of what's going on for people who are learning our profession and who are interns or who are in their practicum or what have you. We have to think about those pieces.

Gate-keeping is an important role that educators and supervisors play, but I urge you to be gatekeepers with compassion and with understanding about those around you. John, I think we asked some questions too relative to reaching out to other.

JOHN WALSH: We did. And when we look back at our survey results, we asked about reaching out to others and we heard from the results that sometimes it's more effective coming from a peer, as opposed to a manager or an administrator in a work setting. Sometimes just checking in regularly with folks, allowing someone who is struggling to verbalize what they are feeling and reflecting back what you're hearing with a colleague, sometimes that could be a real plus in a work setting.





Also finding ways to address a colleague's apparent struggle without the colleague feeling that you're being critical of them or their performance, or that somehow this is a type of criticism of what they're doing. And also relating back to office culture, having that type of work culture, of assistance, and as you had mentioned, that core empathy of how we can be helpful to another human being.

ROB FROEHLICH: Yeah. Kind of coming back, it's a recurrent theme of self-care and interaction with colleagues, too, it's very individualized. I had an opportunity to talk about this topic a few weeks ago in another class. And when I asked students, what do you need when you are in a really difficult situation?

Well, the answers, the responses from them were all over the place. Some people really needed somebody to be there with them, to hear their experience and process it, and other people said, sometimes I just need a little bit of time alone and then to come back to the support. So it's really, remember, it's very individualized. Sometimes we really become hyper-focused on policies and procedures and process, and in no way, shape, or form do I indicate that they're not important. Policies, procedures, and process are huge and important, but sometimes we have to remember the human piece of it, too.

It's true, not only in vocational rehabilitation, not only in the counseling field, but in the US world of work as well, as we become a more litigious society, we become more fearful of what we're doing. Sometimes we over-think. Sometimes what's really needed is a neighborly approach, a supportive approach, but a non-intrusive approach. One size really doesn't fit all.

But the one thing that I really do want to say is that ignoring colleagues' impairment is not an option. Our code of ethics says it's not an option, and just as the professionals that we've been trained to be and the human beings that we are, ignoring this is not an option. So if you find yourself in that type of situation, perhaps a discussion with that colleague relative to some of the materials and some of the thoughts and topics we've discussed today really might be in order.

And remember, simple gestures. Remember being neighborly. And then think about for you, like I said, it's very individualized. But think about a time when you were feeling particularly overwhelmed, what did you need? What did you want those around you to know, at what level, at what depth? And how could others have been helpful to you? Sometimes putting yourself in that as-if moment helps you when you're the other party who can be helpful.

So I just share them with you for your consideration. John, I think you had a couple of wrap up points that we wanted to make before we finish our time together, right?

JOHN WALSH: Absolutely. So first of all, thank you Dr. Froehlich for providing us a really comprehensive look at ethics in self-care in a professional environment and also providing so many resources so that our audience can continue their learning around this area. When we



look at kind of wrapping up this webinar and kind of hitting on some key points, it's important to remember that self-care is an ethical practice.

Self-care really encompasses an array of activities that are meant to meet an individual personal needs. The other piece is that it's important to remember that we are a community within the rehabilitation and counseling arena and it is necessary and ethical for community members to care about one another. self-care can start small, and even small progress can pay big dividends for you, your clients, and your colleagues. So we are welcoming you and encouraging you, please start your journey today.

ROB FROEHLICH: And so if you're interested in talking with any of us further relative to this, you can contact me. Again, this is Rob Froehlich. I am a project director with the Center for Rehabilitation Counseling Research and Education at the George Washington University. My email is [rfro@gwu.edu](mailto:rfro@gwu.edu), or you can reach me by phone at area code 804-794-6667.

JOHN WALSH: And I also extend that invitation to me as well. I am John Walsh, the project director of the Center for Innovative Training in VR. My email address is [jcwalsh@gwu.edu](mailto:jcwalsh@gwu.edu). And my cell number is 267-961-3148. I also ask you to look forward for additional webinars from the Center for Innovative Training in VR. We will be putting together future topics based on the results of our needs assessment that we're currently doing with all state VR agencies throughout the country. So we greatly thank you for joining us today. We look forward to engaging with you in the future.